



# **Did the Great Companion Abdullah Ibn Masud Prohibit Loud Group Dhikr? (Pebbles Hadith)**

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### **Introduction**

Even though there are several hadiths in favour of loud congregational dhikr narrated by the giant Hadith Masters such as Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim (Allah have mercy on them), we still find some people objecting by presenting a narration that they attribute to the great Sahaba Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him). The narration is found in the Sunan of Imam Darimi:

### **Narration in Question**

al-Darimi in the Muqaddima of his Sunan narrated from al-Hakam ibn al-Mubarak who narrates from Umar bin Yahya who narrates from his father Yahya who narrates from Amar bin Salima:

We used to sit by the door of `Abd Allah ibn Mas`ud before the Morning Prayer, so that when he came out we would walk with him to the mosque. (One day) Abu Musa al-Ash`ari came to us and said: "Has Abu `Abd al-Rahman come out yet?" We replied No. So he sat down with us until he came out. When he came out, we all stood along with him, so Abu Musa said to him: "O Abu `Abd al-Rahman! I have just seen something in the mosque which I considered wrong, but all praise is for Allah, I did not see anything except good in it." He inquired: "What is it?" Abu Musa replied: "If you live you will see it. I saw in the mosque people sitting in circles awaiting the Prayer. In each circle they had pebbles in their hands and a man would say: Repeat Allahu Akbar a hundred times. So they would repeat it a hundred times. Then he would say: say La Ilaha illAllah a hundred times. So they would say it a hundred times. Then he would say: say SubhanAllah a hundred times. So they would say it a hundred times." Ibn Mas`ud asked: "What did you say to them?" Abu Musa said: "I did not say anything to them. Instead I waited to hear your view on it."

Ibn Mas`ud replied: "Would that you had ordered them to count their evil deeds and assured them that their good deeds would not be lost!" Then we went along with him until he came to one of these circles whereby he stood and said: "What is this I see you doing?" They replied: "O Abu `Abd al-Rahman! These are pebbles upon which we are counting takbir, tahlil and tasbih." He said: "Count your evil deeds instead. I assure you that none of your good deeds will be lost. Woe to you, O Umma of Muhammad, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, how quickly you go to destruction! Here are your Prophet's Companions available in abundance (mutawafirun). And there are his clothes which have not yet decayed and his bowl which is unbroken. By Him in Whose Hand is my soul! Either you are following a Religion that is better guided than the Religion of Muhammad sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, or you are opening a door of misguidance." They said: "O Abu `Abd al-Rahman! By Allah, we only intend good!" He said: "How many are there who intend good but do not achieve it. Indeed Allah's Messenger said to us: A people will recite the Qur'an but it will not pass beyond their throats. By Allah! I do not know, but perhaps most of them are from among you." Then he left them.

Amar bin Salima said: We saw most of those people fighting against us on the day of Nahrawan, on the side of the Khawarij.

### **Answer to the Narration**

Let us first state the opinion of the giant classical scholars about this narration. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Imam Jalaluddin Al-Suyuti, Imam Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, Imam Muhammad al-Munawi, Imam Ismael Haqqi and Allamah Alusi (Allah have mercy on all of them) have said that this narration of Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) is unreliable as it goes against the Quran and Sunnah!

#### **Imam Jalaluddin Al Suyuti**

Imam al-Suyuti (Allah have mercy on him) said in his book *Natijat al-Fikr* (his work on the permissibility of loud group dhikr), “This narration from Ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) needs exposition in terms of its chain of narrations and who of the hadith masters transmitted it in their works, and **I have seen evidence that would disprove its being established from Ibn Masud.**”

#### **Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal**

Imam al-Suyuti further goes on to write, that Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy on him) transmitted in his *Kitab al-Zuhd*, that Husain ibn Muhammad related with his chain from Abu Wa'il that he said, “Those who think that Abdullah Ibn Masud used to prohibit the dhikr! **I never sat with Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud in a gathering save that he did dhikr in it.**”

**Point to note: How can Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) consider it a biddah to do congregational dhikr when he himself participated in this dhikr?!?! This reference of Kitab al-Zuhd by Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal has been quoted by Imam Suyuti, Imam Ibn Hajar al-Haytami and Imam Muhammad al-Munawi in their books.**

#### **Imam Muhammad al-Munawi**

Imam Muhammad al-Munawi writes in his book *Fayd al-Qadir* that this event of people being thrown out of the Mosque - there is no evidence for it. He further goes onto quote Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal from *Kitab al-Zuhd* that Abdullah ibn Masud used to sit in gatherings and perform dhikr in it.

#### **Allamah Alusi**

Allamah Alusi in his tafsir *Ruh-ul-Mani* has written on the commentary [Surah Taha 20, Verse 7: “*Though you speak out loud, He knows your secrets and what is even more concealed.*”] Allamah Alusi states that the incident mentioned regarding Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) throwing people out of the Mosque **is not correct and the earlier Muhadditheen have all rejected it.**

He further writes that this narration conflicts against the many authentic narrations in support of loud dhikr and that Abdullah ibn Masud himself did loud dhikr during the time of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be Upon him). He further writes, that if one does assume that such an event did take place, one possible explanation (if any) could be that he threw the men out of the mosque due to them being a nuisance by performing excessively loud dhikr but I still hold the position that the narration is weak and the chains are unreliable.

### **Imam Ismael Haqqi**

Imam Ismael Haqqi in his Ruh ul Bayan rejects this narration of Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) by quoting the following verse of the Holy Quran [Surah Baqarah 02, Verse 114: *"Who could do greater wrong than someone who prevents access to the mosques of Allah, preventing His name from being remembered in them, and goes about destroying them?"*]

Imam Ismael Haqqi goes onto say that how could Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) know this verse of the Qur'an and then possibly prevent people to gather and remember Almighty Allah in the mosques. He says the chain is already very weak and therefore it is unreliable but even more so this would mean Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) has gone against the Quran which is absolutely not possible to believe.

### **This narration goes against Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim**

Even if this narration were established, it goes against explicit rigorously authenticated Prophetic hadiths that permit dhikr out loud as long as it is not excessively loud. These hadiths are given precedence over this narration when their indication conflicts.

We present here only a couple of hadiths from Sahih Bukhari to illustrate this point:

Narrated Abu Ma'bad:

(the freed slave of Ibn 'Abbas) Ibn 'Abbas told me, "In the lifetime of the Prophet it was the custom to celebrate Allah's praises **aloud** after the compulsory congregational prayers." Ibn 'Abbas further said, "When I heard the Dhikr, I would learn that the compulsory congregational prayer had ended." [Volume 1, Book 12, Number 802]

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas:

I used to recognize the completion of the prayer of the Prophet by hearing Takbir. [Volume 1, Book 12, Number 803]

So point to ponder: Do you not think Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) was at these congregational prayers at which the **loud dhikr** would take place upon completion? So one begins to understand that the purpose (if any) of Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) to remove people from the Masjid must have been due to reasons which collided against Quran and Sunnah, and not congregational loud dhikr which was a common practice during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be Upon him).

### **Critical Analysis of the narration found in Sunan of Imam Darimi**

We hear this narration so often to try and discourage people to gather together to do congregational dhikr together. But we also find this is the only narration which goes against loud dhikr. **However it is weak and unreliable.** It has a chain of narration back to Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) as the science of narration and hadith works.

Imam Darimi writes it, narrating from:

1. **Hakim ibn Mubarak** who is the 1<sup>st</sup> narrator.
2. He says I heard it from **Umar bin Yahya** – 2<sup>nd</sup> person in this narration.
3. He says I heard it from my father **Yahya** – 3<sup>rd</sup> person in this narration.
4. He says I heard it from **Amar bin Salima** – 4<sup>th</sup> person in this narration.

So essentially there are 4 narrators of this narration!

We will now analyse the reliability of these four narrators.

#### **1) Hakim ibn Mubarak**

**Allamah Dhahabi in his book *Nizamul Ihtedal* writes, Hakim ul Mubarak used to steal the hadiths.**

What it means to steal hadith, is somebody who basically when narrating a hadith omits the person they heard it from but state they heard it from the person prior to that. For example instead of “I heard from Person X who heard from Person Y”, they will say “I heard from Person Y” and omit out Person X. By doing this, the person is stealing the merit of the narration because they wanted there own name in the narration, add credit to it and to show there name was early in the chain of narration.

So in summary, Haakim-ibn-Mubarak who is the first narrator in this Darimi narration (and is also the teacher of Imam Darimi) is know to be a stealer of hadith therefore his reliability and credibility has been brought into question by Allamah Dhahabi.

#### **2) Umar bin Yahyah**

**Hafiz ibn Hajar al-Asqalani has said in his book *Lisan al-Mizan*, that Umar bin Yahya is a weak narrator and he used to fabricate narrations and he is not to be taken as a credible or reliable narrator.** So hear we find that the 2<sup>nd</sup> narrator of the narration also undermined.

Before continuing, let it be known, that the 2<sup>nd</sup> narrator quoted by Imam Darimi is definitely **UMAR** bin Yahya and not Amar bin Yahya.

However al-Albaani writes, that the scribe (student) of Imam Darimi made a mistake when he was writing this narration and that it should have been Amar bin Yahya and not Umar bin Yahya.

Secondly al-Albaani explains this point by quoting from *Tehzeeb ul Kumal* by Hafiz Mizi gave a list of Imam Darimi’s teachers and one of them was Amar bin Yahya and not Umar bin Yahya.

But surely if it says Umar bin Yahya in Darimi, then we would need to accept that because al-Albaani came many hundreds of years later and seems to be the first person to reject it was Umar bin Yahya but rather it was according to al-Albaani Amar bin Yahya. But this really is a weak excuse to try and strengthen a weak narration.

We have already proven that Hafiz ibn Hajar al-Asqalani considered Umar bin Yahya as unreliable. Let's presume, the second narrator is Amar bin Yahya (as claimed by al-Albaani) and see what the scholars say about him:

**Hafiz ibn Hajar al-Asqalani in his book *Lisan al-Mizan*, said Amar bin Yahyah is considered a nobody in the science of hadiths.**

**Imam Kharaash another great scholar, said he was not happy with his narrations and the giant authority Yahya ibn Ma'in has said that Amar bin Yahyah narrations are nothing.** *(Imam Yahya ibn Ma'een (rahmatullahi alaihi) (died 233 A.H.) was a famous Muhaddith and expert of Rijaal (critical analysis of the narrators of ahadeeth).*

This means out-rightly, this narrator, whether it is Umar bin Yahya or Amar bin Yahya, as the second narrator is unreliable and weak.

### **3) Yahyah**

This is the father of Umar bin Yahya and there is no dispute about this narrator.

### **4) Amar (Amr) bin Salima**

The fourth narrator who claims to have seen this event of Abdullah Ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him), his name is Amar bin Salima. The problem with him is that historically there has been a confusion about who Amar bin Salima is due to there being two person with the same name. One is Amr bin Salima al-Hamadani al Kufi. The other is Amr bin Salma Bin Kharad al Jurni. So there was confusion as to which Amar witnessed the event.

**Imam Ibn Abi Hatim says that although historically there has been confusion, but both these Amar are in fact the one person and he is also a weak and unreliable narrator.** *(Imam Ibn Abi Hatim is an absolute authority of analysing the Chain of Narrations.)*

### **Summary of narration found in Sunan of Imam Darimi**

**1<sup>st</sup> narrator: Haakim-ibn-Mubarak - Stealer of Hadith!**

**2<sup>nd</sup> narrator: Umar bin Yahya - Weak narrator, fabricates narrations, not credible, not reliable!**

**3<sup>rd</sup> narrator: Yahya - No dispute.**

**4<sup>th</sup> narrator: Amar bin Salima - Weak narrator, unreliable!**

### **Critical Analysis of the narration found in Kitab al-Biddah by Muhammad ibn Waddah**

Unfortunately the people who doubt if loud group dhikr is permissible also present evidence from a book called *Kitab al-Biddah* by Muhammad ibn Waddah. Furthermore al-Albani says the narration is Hassan (good). So let's analyse the narrations in this book in more detail.

#### **Is Muhammad ibn Waddah reliable?**

We are aware of Muhammad ibn Waddah who is a Spanish scholar, he has written this book on *Kitab al-Biddah*. We admit he must have been a pious and well learned scholar. However a lot of other scholars of Islam have doubted him in his works and some of the stuff he has written. For example Imam Dhahabi writes in his book *Tazkara tul Huffaz*, a lot of scholars of Hadith were not so pleased with Muhammad bin Waddah because he used to object to authentic narrations of the Prophet (peace & blessings be upon him) and used to refute them and claim them to be wrong. So there is not an unanimous consensus or positivity of Muhammad ibn Waddah. The scholars are of different opinions about who he is and what his work was about.

#### **The student of Muhammad ibn Waddah wrote his book!**

Secondly Muhammad ibn Waddah's book *Kitab al-Biddah* was written by his scribe (student) Asbagh bin Malik. He was not a scholar. He was only a teacher of the Quran. We don't know anything about him or his reliability and therefore there is serious doubt as to whether this book even belongs to Muhammad ibn Waddah. There is very little known about Asbagh bin Malik, he is neither a scholar or a muhaddith and therefore the credibility is doubted and we don't know for sure if it can even be attributed to Muhammad bin Waddah.

It is very uncommon for the (scribe) narrator of a book to not be scholar of hadith. For example Imam Bukhari's book *Sahih Bukhari Sharif* is narrated by Muhammad bin Yusuf al-Firabri who is a Scholar of Hadith himself. For example Imam Muslim's *Sahih Muslim Sharif* is narrated by Abu Isaac who is a Scholar of Hadith himself. For example Imam Ahmad bin Humble's book *Musnad Ahmad* is narrated by his son Abdullah bin Ahmad who is a scholar of hadith himself. All these people – the (writers) scribes of the book are scholars of hadith themselves, so when Asbagh bin Malik is not mentioned as a scholar of hadith, not a scholar of Islamic knowledge, not a muhaddith but simply a student and teacher of Quran, it is rather unusual to accept him as a narrator of a book.

#### **Analysis of the Chain of Narrators**

The chain of narration that Muhammad bin Waddah gives is not credible. The reason for that is because Muhammad ibn Waddah actually says he heard or reports the narration from:

1. **Asad bin Musa** – Narrator No1
2. Asad bin Musa reports it from **Abdah ibn Abi Lubaba**, - Narrator No. 2
3. Abdah ibn Abi Lubaba reports it from Abdullah Ibn Masud (r.a)

So 2 narrators between Muhammad ibn Waddah and Abdullah Ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him).

## **1) Asad bin Musa**

Muhammad ibn Waddah claims to have heard the narration from Asad bin Musa. But Allamah Dhahabi and ibn Asakir in *Tarikh Ulama al-Andalus (The History of the Scholars of Al Andalus)* write that Assad bin Musa (Narrator No.1 ) was an Egyptian Scholar of Hadith who died in 212 A.H.

Muhammad bin Waddah (who is the book we are talking about), he went to Egypt for the first time in 218 A.H – this is 6 years after Asad bin Musa passed away. Historically it is proven that Assad bin Musa was not even alive at that time so instantly it throws into doubt whether the two of these people met and whether this narration was even narrated or reported between the two of them. So there is doubt as to whether Muhammad ibn Waddah even met Assad bin Musa – supposedly the first narrator of this narration!

## **2) Abdah ibn Abi Lubada**

Now even if we are to accept that Muhammad bin Waddah did meet Assad bin Musa there is a problem with the next step of the narration which is Abdah ibn Abi Lubaba and Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him). Now with regards to this narrator Allamah ibn Hazm has written in his book *al-Ahkam Chapter 17* that Abdah ibn Abi Lubaba never met Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) - This means there is no meeting that is proven between these two!

## **Initial Summary of Kitab al-Biddah by Muhammad ibn Waddah**

At both stages of this chain of narration there are problems with regards to whether the narrators had even met. This throws the narration and its chain into doubt and into weakness and essentially makes it a broken and unauthentic narration.

## **Analysis of the additional Chains in Kitab al-Biddah by Muhammad ibn Waddah**

Lets take a further look at four additional chains of narration in this book, *Kitab al-Biddah* by Muhammad ibn Waddah. The four narrators who supposedly heard the report **directly** from Abdullah bin Masud (Allah be pleased with him) are:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Narrator: **Salith bin Bahram**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Narrator: **Sayar Abu al-Hakam**
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Narrator: **Abdullah bin Zyad bin Samaan**
- 4th Narrator: **Asbaan bin Abi Ayaash**

All four are separate and unique chains.

## **1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Chain - Salith bin Bahram & Sayar Abu al-Hakam**

Hafiz ibn Hajar al-Asqalani writes in his book *Tahzib al-Tahzib* that Salith and Sayar Abu al-Hakam were Taba Tabiyeen (Students of the students of the Sahaba). So how could they possibly have even met the Companion Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) when they themselves are Taba Tabiyeen? The reality is they could not possibly have met Abdullah



ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) given that they are Taba Tabiyeen. It could only be accepted that they are narrators of this narration if they say they heard from a Tabiyeen who then heard from Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him). But the reality as outlined by Hafiz ibn Hajar al-Asqalani is that they were Taba Tabiyeen therefore there is no possibility that they heard this narration from Abdullah bin Masud (Allah be pleased with him). Therefore both of these two chains are broken and cannot be used as evidence.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Chain – Abdullah bin Ziyad bin Samaan**

Imam Ibn Abi Hatim said in his book *Al-Jarh wa al-Tadil* that this narrator Abdullah bin Ziyad bin Samaan is not to be trusted, that he was known for telling lies. Imam Malik (rahmatullahi alaihi) also said that he is known for telling lies. In addition to this, Imam Yahya ibn Ma'een (*huge authority on the chain of narration*) said that he (Abdullah bin Ziyad bin Samaan) was someone who told lies and was unreliable.

### **4<sup>th</sup> Chain – Asbaan bin Abi Ayyash**

Imam Ibn Abi Hatim has said that Asbaan bin Abi Ayyash is someone who tells lies. Imam Nasai (rahmatullahi alaihi) has said that he is someone who is weak and has been rejected by the scholars of Hadith.

## **Conclusion**

So no matter which chain we have looked at, they are weak, unreliable and filled with narrators who cannot be trusted – this is the reality!

We are constantly finding that for every chain of narration we find that the narrators are either unreliable or have not been accepted by the Scholars.

The narration goes against the hadith in Sahih Bukhari & Sahih Muslim that support loud group dhikr.

The fact we have “stealers” of hadith in this Darimi narration and also narrators classified as weak and unreliable should also make us all haste in using this to accuse Muslims and prevent Muslims from doing congregational dhikr.

So where did this narration (if any) ever come from one might ask – did such an event take place and perhaps it has been confused. Imam Tabarani also mentions this narration with another weak chain. He mentions it by the narrator Abdul Bari who is also weak. Imam Tabarani in his narration mentions the whole event of the loud congregational dhikr and how some people were thrown out of the Mosque. **But Imam Tabarani also mentions an additional sentence. He says that the people in the mosque were also telling stories of their old Arab ancestors and that Abdullah Ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) was not prohibiting the loud dhikr but he was prohibiting such story telling in the mosque of the Prophet (peace & blessings be upon him). This can explain the basis of the origins if any.**

Sayyiduna Abdullah Ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) saw the people not doing dhikr but actually story telling and therefore told them to go out of the mosque because he could also

foresee with his spiritual insight and knowledge that these people will join the khawarij as stated in the book by Imam Darimi.

Finally every single chain of narration that has been presented in this article leads only to weak and unreliable narrators and does not technically directly link to Abdullah bin Masud (Allah be pleased with him). Therefore these narrations prohibiting loud congregational zikr cannot be accepted, the chains have been broken, they are unreliable and therefore not authentic, therefore perform loud congregational zikr fearlessly, you are **not** performing a biddah!